

CHAPTER 58

THE FAITH OF ENOCH

(~~8116~~ HEBREWS 11:5, 6)

The apostle makes it his principal design in this chapter to convince the Hebrews of the nature, importance and efficacy of saving faith. In the execution of his design, he first described the essential actings of faith (verse 1), and then in all that follows he treats of the effects, fruits, and achievements of faith. It is blessed to behold how that once more his appeal was to the Holy Scriptures. Not by abstract arguments, still less by bare assertions, would he persuade them; but instead, by setting forth some of the many examples and proofs which the sacred records furnished. Having reminded them of what the faith-obedience of Abel procured, namely, the obtaining of a witness from God that he was righteous, the apostle cites the case of Enoch who exemplifies another aspect and consequent of faith.

The *order* observed by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 11 is not the historical one. A careful reading of its contents will make this clear. For example, reference is made in verse 9 to Isaac and Jacob before attention is directed to Sarah in verse 11; the falling down of Jericho's walls (verse 30), is mentioned before the faith of Rahab (verse 31); in verse 32 Gideon is mentioned before Barak, Samson before Jephtha, and David before Samuel. Thus it is evident that we are to "search" for something deeper. Since the chronological order is departed from again and again, must there not be a spiritual significance to the way in which the O.T. saints are here referred to? Without a doubt such must be the case. The reason for this is not far to seek: it is the *experimental* order which is followed in this chapter. If the Lord permits, this will become plainer and plainer as we proceed from verse to verse.

That which the three examples supplied in verses 4 to 7 set before us is an outline of the life of faith. Abel is mentioned first not because he was born before Enoch and Noah, but because what is recorded of him in Genesis 4 illustrated and demonstrated where the life of faith begins. In like manner, Enoch is referred to next not because he is mentioned before Noah in the

book of Genesis, but because what was found in him (or rather, what Divine grace had wrought in him), must precede that which was typified by the builder of the ark. Each of these three men adumbrated a distinct feature or aspect of the life of faith, and the order concerning them is inviolable. Another before us, has characterized them thus: in Abel we see faith's worship, in Enoch faith's walk, in Noah faith's witness. This, we believe, is an accurate and helpful way of stating it, and the more it be pondered, the more its beauty and blessedness should be perceived.

But man ever reverses God's order, and never was this fact more plainly evident to the anointed eye than in these degenerate times in which our lot is cast. Witnessing and working ("service") is what are so much emphasized today. Yet dear reader, Hebrews 11 does not begin with the example of Noah. No indeed. Noah was preceded by Enoch, and for this reason: there can be no Divinely-acceptable witness or work unless and until there is a walking with God! Enoch's walk with God must come before any service which is pleasing *to Him*. Alas that this is so much lost sight of now. Alas that, so generally, as soon as a young person makes profession of being a Christian, he or she is pushed into some form of "Christian activity" — open-air speaking, personal work, teaching a Sunday school class — when God's word so plainly says, "*Not a novice* (margin, "one newly come to the faith") lest being lifted up with pride (which almost always proves to be the case) he fall into the condemnation of the Devil" (~~5416~~1 Timothy 3:6).

O how much we miss and lose through failing to give close heed to the *order* of God's words. Frequently have we emphasized this fact in these pages, yet not too frequently. God is a God of order, and the moment we depart from His arrangements, confusion, with all its attendant evils, at once ensues. We cannot pay too strict attention to the order in which things are presented to us in Holy Writ, for only as we do so, are we in the position to learn some of its most salutary lessons and admire its heavenly wisdom. Such is the case here. Enoch's walk of faith must precede Noah's witnessing by faith; and this, in turn, must be preceded by Abel's worship of faith. There must be that setting aside of our own preferences and ways, that bowing to God's will, that submitting to His appointments, that obedience to His requirements, before there can be any real walking with Him. Obedience *to Him*, then walking *with Him*, then witnessing *for Him*, is Heaven's unchanging order.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (verse 5).

The case of Abel shows us *where* the life of faith begins; the example of Enoch teaches us *of what* the life of faith consists. Now just as we had to refer to Genesis 4 to understand ~~8104~~ Hebrews 11:4, so we have to turn back to Genesis 5 for its light to be thrown upon our present verse.

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (~~0054~~ Genesis 5:24).

Here we have set forth, in the form of a brief summary, the new life of the believer: to “walk with God.” Previously, Enoch had “walked according to the course of this world” (~~4002~~ Ephesians 2:2), had gone his “own way” (~~2506~~ Isaiah 53:6) of self-pleasing, and unconcerned about the future, had thought only of the present. But now he had been “reconciled to God” (~~4050~~ 2 Corinthians 5:20), for “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (~~3000~~ Amos 3:3). The term “walk” signifies a voluntary act, a steady advance, a progress in spiritual things. To “walk with God” imports a life surrendered to God, a life controlled by God, a life lived for God. It is to that our present verse has reference.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” It should be obvious to any Spirit-taught heart that we need to look beneath the surface here if we are to discover the *spiritual principle* of the verse, and seek grace to apply it to ourselves. As a mere historical statement it is doubtless a very interesting one, yet as such it imparts no strength to my needy soul. The bare fact that a man who walked this earth thousands of years ago escaped death may astonish, but it supplies no practical help. What we wish to press upon the reader is, the need for asking each portion of Scripture he reads, the question, What is there here, what practical lesson, *to help me* while I am left on earth? Nor is this always discovered in a moment: prayer, patience, meditation are required.

As we endeavor to *study* our verse with the object of ascertaining its practical meaning and message for us today, the first thing the thoughtful ponderer will notice is the repetition of the word “translated”: this occurring no less than three times in one verse, is evidently the keyword.

According to its etymology, “translated” signifies to carry across, to bear up, to remove, to change from one place to another. This at once brings to mind (if the Word of Christ be dwelling in us richly) that verse,

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and *hath translated us* into the kingdom of His dear Son” (^{<S01B>}Colossians 1:13).

This refers to the grand fact of the Christian’s present standing and state before God: he has “passed from death unto life” (^{<R124>}John 5:24). Now it is the Christian’s privilege and duty to live in the power of this fact, and have it made good in his actual case and experience; and this *will be* so, just in proportion as he is enabled to live and walk by *faith*.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death”. the word “see” here has the force of taste or experience. Enoch was not to be overcome by death: but let us not limit our thoughts unto physical death. Just as Enoch’s “translation” from earth to heaven has a deeper meaning than the natural, so “that he should not see death” signifies more than an escape from the grave. “Death” is the wages of sin, the curse of the broken law. We are living in a world which is under God’s righteous curse and death is plainly stamped across everything in it. But when faith is in exercise, the soul is lifted above this scene, and its favored possessor is enabled to “walk in newness of life.” As we saw when pondering the opening verse, it is the nature of faith to bring near things future, and to obtain proof and enjoyment of what is invisible to natural sight. Just so far as we walk by faith, is the heart “translated,” raised above this poor world; and then it is we experience the “*power of His (Christ’s) resurrection*” (^{<S010>}Philippians 3:10).

Let us now link verses 4 and 5 together, observing their *doctrinal* force. When a sinner, by surrender to God and faith in the sacrifice of Christ, is pronounced righteous by the Judge of all, he is made an heir of eternal life, and sin and death can no more have dominion over him: that is, no longer have any legal claim upon him. It is *this* which is illustrated here: the very next saint who is mentioned after Abel, was taken to Heaven *without* dying, thereby demonstrating that the power of “death” over the Christian has been annulled. First a sinner saved through the blood of the Lamb (Abel), then a saved sinner removed from earth to Heaven, and nothing between. How inexpressibly blessed! Words fail us, and we can but bow in silent wonderment, and worship. How “great” is God’s salvation!

Now that which is a fact of Christian doctrine needs to become a fact of Christian experience: we need to enjoy the good, the power, the blessedness of it in our souls day by day. And this can only be as a supernatural faith is in exercise. A bare knowledge of doctrine is practically worthless, unless the heart earnestly seeks from God a practical out-working of it. It is one thing to believe that I have judicially passed from death unto life, it is quite another to live practically in the realm of LIFE. But that is exactly what a *life of faith* is: it is a being lifted above the things which are seen, and a being occupied with those things which are unseen. It is for the affections to be no longer set on things on the earth, but to have them fixed on things in Heaven.

Perhaps the reader is inclined to say, The ideal you set before us is indeed beautiful, but it is impossible for flesh and blood to attain unto it. Quite true, dear friend; we fully grant it. Of himself the Christian can no more live practically upon resurrection-ground than Enoch could transport himself to Heaven. But observe carefully the very next words in our wonderful text: “because *God* had translated him.” Again we beg you not to carnalize these words, and see in them *only* a reference to his bodily removal to Heaven; or to see in them nothing more than a type and pledge of the Rapture — the fulfillment of ^{<51416>}1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17: that is the prophetic significance; but there is a spiritual meaning and practical application also, and this is what we so much desire to make clear unto each spiritual reader.

Enoch’s translation to heaven was a miracle, and that which is spiritually symbolized is a supernatural experience. The whole Christian life, from start to finish, is a *supernatural* thing. The new birth is a miracle of grace, for one who is dead in trespasses and sins can no more regenerate himself than he can create a world. A spiritual repentance and spiritual faith are imparted by “the operation of God” (^{<51022>}Colossians 2:12), for a fallen creature can no more originate them than he could give himself being. To have the heart divorced from the world, to be brought to hate the things we once loved and to now love the things we once hated, is the alone fruitage of the all-mighty work of the Holy Spirit. And for the heart to function in the realm of resurrection-life, while its possessor is left in a scene of death, can only be made possible and become actual as the supernatural grace of God sustains and calls into exercise a supernatural faith. Only God can daily wean our hearts from the things of this world of death and bring us into real communion with the Prince of Life.

A word of caution here. Let us be on our guard against fatalistically folding our arms and saying, God has not ordained that I should live the *translated* life. True, God is sovereign and distributes His favors as He pleases. True, He grants more grace to some of His own people than to others of them. Yet it is also written that, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (~~301D~~ James 4:2). Moreover, observe well the next words in our text: “before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Ah, does not *that* explain why *our* faith is so feeble, and why the things of earth forge such heavy chains about our hearts? God is not likely to strengthen and increase our faith while we are so largely indifferent to *His* pleasure. There must first be the daily, diligent, prayerful striving to please Him in all things; this is absolutely essential if we are to enter into the experience of the *translated* life.

Let us seek to anticipate a possible objection. Some may be saying, The *translated life* — the continuous exercise of faith which frees the heart from the grave-clothes of this world — is so exceedingly *difficult* these days. Then let us remind you of the times in which Enoch lived. It was just before the Flood, and probably conditions then were far worse than they are now. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints: To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (~~6014~~ Jude 14, 15). It must be remembered that those words had an historical force, as well as a prophetic. Thus, a life of pleasing God, of walking with Him, of the heart being lifted above the world, was no easier then than now. Yet Divine grace made this actual in Enoch; and that grace is as potent today as it was then.

Oftentimes it is helpful to reverse the clauses of a verse so as to perceive more clearly their relation. In order to illustrate this, and because we are so anxious for the reader to lay hold of the vitally-important teaching of ~~8105~~ Hebrews 11:5, we will treat it accordingly. “Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Do I? Do you? That is a most timely inquiry. If we are *not* “pleasing God,” then the more knowledge we have of His truth, the worse for us.

“That servant which *knew* his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither *did* according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes” (~~1247~~ Luke 12:47).

God will not be mocked. Fair words and reverent postures cannot deceive Him. It is not how much light do I have, but how far am I in complete subjection to the Lord?

“God had translated him.” Of course He did. God always honors those who honor Him; but let us remember that same verse adds,

“And they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (~~0020~~ 1 Samuel 2:30).

God is too holy to encourage self-pleasing and put a premium upon self-indulgence. While we gratify the flesh, the blessing of the Spirit will be withheld. While our hearts are so much occupied with the concerns of earth, He will not make the things of Heaven real and efficacious to us. O my reader, if God be not working mightily in your life and mine, showing Himself strong on our behalf (~~1460~~ 2 Chronicles 16:9), then something is seriously wrong with us.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” Remember what was before us in the preceding article:

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (~~4107~~ Romans 10:17).

Faith always presupposes a Divine revelation. Faith must have a foundation to rest upon, and that foundation must be the word of Him that cannot lie. God had spoken, and Enoch believed. But what a testing of faith! God declared that Enoch should be removed from earth to Heaven, without passing through the portals of the grave. One, two, three hundred years passed; but Enoch *believed God*, and before the fourth century was completed His promise was fulfilled. “That he should not see death” was the reward of his pleasing God. And He does not change: where there is a genuine “pleasing” of Him, a real walking with Him, He elevates the heart above this scene into the realm of life, light and liberty.

Ere passing on to the next verse, let us enumerate other points of interest and value contained in this one, though we can do no more than barely mention them.

1. God is not tied to the order of nature: ~~<OBS>~~Genesis 3:19 was set aside in the cases of Enoch and Elijah.
2. God puts great outward (providential) differences between those equally accepted by Him: He did so between Abel and Enoch.
3. To exhibit the world's enmity God suffered Abel to be martyred, to comfort His people God preserved Enoch.
4. What God did for Enoch He can and will yet do for a whole generation of His saints (~~<ISS>~~1 Corinthians 15:51).
5. There is a future life for believers: the removal of Enoch to Heaven plainly intimated this.
6. The body is partaker with the soul in life eternal: the corporeal translation of Enoch showed this.
7. The godliest do not always live the longest: all mentioned in Genesis 5 stayed on earth a much greater time than did Enoch.
8. They who live with God hereafter must learn to please God ere they depart hence.
9. They who walk with God please Him.
10. They who please God shall not lack testimony thereof.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (verse 6).

The apostle had just spoken of Enoch's translation as a consequent of his pleasing God, and now from the fact of his pleasing God, proves his faith. The adversative particle “But” is used to introduce a syllogism. The argument is framed thus: God Himself had translated Enoch, who before his translation had pleased Him (as his translation evidenced); but without faith it is impossible to please God: — therefore Enoch was by faith translated. Thus, this declaration in verse 6 has special reference to the last clause in the verse preceding. The argument is drawn from the impossibility of the contrary: as it is impossible to please God without faith, and as Enoch received testimony that he *did* please God, then he must have had faith — a justifying and sanctifying faith.

While there is an intimate relation between our present verse and the one immediately preceding, and while as we shall yet see (the Lord willing) that it is closely connected with the case of Noah in verse 7, yet it also makes its own particular contribution unto the theme which the apostle is here developing, supplying both a solemn warning and a blessed encouragement. The Holy Spirit still had before Him the special need of the wavering Hebrews, and would press upon them the fact that the great thing God required was not attendance on outward ordinances, but the diligent seeking unto Him by a whole-hearted trust. Where faith was missing, nothing could meet with His approval; but where faith really existed and was exercised, it would be richly rewarded. This principle is unchanging, so that the central message of our verse speaks loudly to us today, and should search the heart of each one of us.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Most solemnly do these words attest the total depravity of man. So corrupt is the fallen creature, both in soul and body, in every power and part thereof, and so polluted is everything that issues from him, that he cannot of and by himself do anything that is acceptable to the Holy One. “So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (~~400~~Romans 8:8): “they that are in the flesh” means, they that are still in their natural or unregenerate state. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters. But faith looks out of self to Christ, applies unto His righteousness, pleads *His* worth and worthiness, and does all things God-ward in the name and through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Thus, by faith we may please God.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him.” Yet in all ages there have been many who attempted to please God without faith. Cain began it, but failed woefully. All in their Divine worship profess a desire to please God, and hope that they do so; why otherwise should they make the attempt? But, as the apostle declares in another place, many seek unto God

“but not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law”
(~~402~~Romans 9:32).

But where faith be lacking, let men desire, design, and do what they will, they can never attain unto Divine acceptance. “But to Him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for (“unto”) righteousness” (~~405~~Romans 4:5). Whatever be the necessity of other graces, faith is that which alone obtains acceptance with God.

In order to please God four things must concur, all of which are accomplished by faith.

First, the person of him that pleaseth God must be accepted of Him (^{<0044>}Genesis 4:4).

Second, the thing done that pleaseth God must be in accord with His will (^{<8121>}Hebrews 13:21).

Third, the manner of doing it must be pleasing to God: it must be performed in humility (^{<6510>}1 Corinthians 15:10), in sincerity (^{<2388>}Isaiah 38:3), in cheerfulness (^{<4082>}2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7).

Fourth, the end in view must be God's glory (^{<6101>}1 Corinthians 10:31).

Now faith is the only means whereby these four requirements are met. By faith in Christ the person is accepted of God. Faith makes us submit ourselves to God's will. Faith causes us to examine the manner of what we do Godwards. Faith aims at God's glory: of Abraham it is recorded that he "was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (^{<8040>}Romans 4:20).

How essential it is then that each of us examine himself diligently and make sure that he has *faith*. It is by faith the convicted and repentant sinner is saved (^{<4461>}Acts 16:31). It is by faith that Christ dwells in the heart (^{<4017>}Ephesians 3:17). It is by faith that we live (^{<8121>}Galatians 2:20). It is by faith that we stand (^{<5112>}Romans 11:20; ^{<4014>}2 Corinthians 1:24). It is by faith we walk (^{<4017>}2 Corinthians 5:7). It is by faith the Devil is successfully resisted (^{<6018>}1 Peter 5:8, 9). It is by faith we are experimentally sanctified (^{<4018>}Acts 26:18). It is by faith we have access to God (^{<4012>}Ephesians 3:12, ^{<5122>}Hebrews 10:22). It is by faith that we fight the good fight (^{<5462>}1 Timothy 6:12). It is by faith that the world is overcome (^{<6104>}1 John 5:4). Reader, are you certain that *you* have the "faith of God's elect" (^{<5001>}Titus 1:1)? If not, it is high time you make sure, for "without faith it is *impossible* to please God."